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ABSTRACT

This book presents an ethnography of community efforts in Carpinteria, California, to bridge ethnic differences, empower parents, and improve education for the town's diverse student population. Located on the central California coast south of Santa Barbara, Carpinteria has been home to generations of Mexican immigrants and their children. Over the past 15 years, a Latino parent organization, Comité de Padres Latinos/Committee of Latino Parents (COPLA), has become a formal agency through which Latinos can navigate the school system and advocate for their children's education. However, rather than focusing on the structure and merits of the organization, this book spotlights the individuals and families involved in COPLA. Many of these people are Spanish-speaking immigrants from Mexico, but their story encompasses a much wider community, including Latinos whose families have been in the United States for generations and European-Americans. Chapters detail the values and experiences of parents interacting with teachers and principals, attending COPLA meetings, making presentations to educators or other parents, supporting each other, creating community, building leadership, and helping their children with schoolwork and school problems. (Contains 189 references, notes, and an index.) (SV)